United Nations ST/AI/2000/21

Secretariat

22 December 2000

Administrative instruction

Occasional recuperation break

The Under-Secretary-General for Management, pursuant to section 4.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1 and for the purpose of defining the terms and conditions governing occasional recuperation break, promulgates the following:

Section 1
General provisions

Purpose and definition

1.1 Staff members required to work for extended periods at special missions under hazardous, stressful and difficult conditions shall be granted regular periods of recuperation in the form of an occasional recuperation break (ORB) under the terms of the present instruction, in order to protect their health and well-being, and to ensure optimal work performance upon resumption of similar mission duties, while preserving the operational readiness of field missions.

1.2 ORB is a five-day special leave with full pay granted under staff rules 105.2, 205.3 or 305.2 to eligible staff members. To ensure that the purpose set out in section 1.1 is achieved, ORB is granted automatically once the conditions of the present instruction have been met, in order to give staff time off at regular intervals for rest and recuperation away from the mission area.

Eligibility

1.3 All internationally recruited staff members who are appointed under the 100, 200 or 300 series of the Staff Rules and staff on mission detail who have obtained international status by virtue of their mission assignment shall be eligible for ORB, provided such eligible staff members serve at a special mission or location designated for that purpose in accordance with section 2.

Section 2
Designation of special missions or specific locations within a special mission for ORB purposes

2.1 Special missions or specific locations within a special mission shall be designated for ORB purposes by the Office of Human Resources Management, after

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consultation with the substantive department or departments responsible for the mission, the United Nations Security Coordinator and the staff representatives for international staff serving in the field.

2.2 Designation of a special mission or specific location within a special mission for ORB purposes shall take into account the presence of extraordinary conditions impacting on the health, safety and well-being of staff members, including hardship, isolation, security considerations and hazardous conditions, all of which will normally be reflected in the hardship classification of duty stations located in the mission area. A hardship classification of D or E shall normally lead to designation for ORB purposes.

2.3 Such designation shall normally be made for a one-year period, and shall be subject to annual review. However, significant changes in the mission environment may result in a determination in the course of the year that the mission should, or should no longer, be designated as a special mission for ORB purposes.

2.4 Staff members shall be informed through an information circular of the list of special missions designated for ORB purposes, of any specific locations where staff may be eligible for ORB within a special mission not otherwise designated for ORB purposes, and of the effective date of that designation.

Effect of change in designation

2.5 Eligible staff already present at a mission or location within a special mission which is newly designated for ORB purposes shall start accruing qualifying service as from the effective date of the designation.

2.6 Should a special mission or location cease to be designated for ORB purposes, staff members having accrued three months of qualifying service as of the effective date of the cessation may take ORB within the following month, as provided in section 3.9. There shall be no prorating of ORB for any period shorter than three months served before the effective date of the cessation.

Section 3
ORB conditions

3.1 In order to achieve the purpose defined in section 1.1, ORB shall be granted after three months of qualifying service. ORB shall not be granted during the last month of mission service.

Qualifying service

3.2 In order to be considered as "qualifying" for ORB purposes, service at a special mission or location designated for ORB purposes must be uninterrupted by any of the following:

(a) Travel on official business, including travel for training purposes, if the staff member takes additional time off in conjunction with official travel outside the mission area, unless the official travel is within the mission area;

(b) Absence on family visit travel, home leave, family leave or special leave, or annual leave. However, annual leave of up to three consecutive working days taken in the mission area, or absence of three consecutive calendar days outside the mission area, shall not interrupt the continuity of qualifying service.

When qualifying service has been interrupted, qualifying service accrued before the interruption shall be forfeited and a new period shall begin upon return to duty of the staff member in the mission area.

3.3 Qualifying service shall not be considered interrupted when a staff member is transferred or reassigned without a break from one mission or location designated for ORB purposes to another such mission or location. In such a case, qualifying service accrued at the first mission or location may be carried forward and used at the second mission or location.

3.4 The period of qualifying service shall run from the date of arrival of the staff member at a special mission or location designated for ORB purposes, or from the date of return to such mission or location after interruption of qualifying service, or from the date of return to the mission or location after absence on ORB.

Duration of ORB absence from the mission and combination with other types of authorized absence

3.5 ORB is granted for five working days. No additional days shall be authorized as ORB for travel purposes.

3.6 Subject to the operational requirements of the mission, ORB may be taken in conjunction with weekends or official holidays. It may also be taken in conjunction with annual leave, except when such leave is taken for home leave or family visit travel, as provided in section 3.8 (a) below.

3.7 Unless ORB is combined with annual leave as provided by section 3.6, the maximum absence from the mission area on each ORB period shall not exceed 10 calendar days, including weekends and official holidays.

3.8 ORB may not be combined with any of the following:

(a) Official travel, including for official business, training, home leave and family visit. Should such combination occur after the approval or commencement of ORB, all days previously authorized as ORB shall be charged to annual leave;

(b) Emergency leave, sick leave or family leave. Should such combination occur after the approval or commencement of ORB, all days previously authorized as ORB shall be charged to annual leave, sick leave or family leave, as appropriate;

(c) Travel on departure from the mission area at the end of the staff member's appointment or mission assignment, unless the staff member is transferred or reassigned without a break to another special mission designated for ORB purposes under section 2, in which case he or she may take ORB for a period not exceeding five working days, with a maximum period of absence of 10 days, as provided by section 3.7. A longer period of absence shall result in all days previously authorized for ORB purposes being charged to annual leave.

ORB timing

3.9 In order to achieve its purpose, ORB must be taken within one month following completion of the period of qualifying service and shall be forfeited if the staff member elects not to take ORB within the prescribed period. Should exigencies of service, as determined by the head of administration at the mission, make it impossible for a staff member to take ORB within that period, ORB may be taken

during the following month on an exceptional basis, after which the entitlement to ORB for the particular qualifying period shall no longer exist.

3.10 ORB may not be carried forward from one qualifying period to the next, or combined with a subsequent ORB.

3.11 In view of the strict time constraints during which ORB may be taken, each mission is required to plan allocation of its human resources accordingly. In particular, each mission shall make the necessary arrangements to ensure that:

(a) Staff members are able to avail themselves at the appropriate intervals of their ORB and annual leave entitlements;

(b) The office is appropriately covered within existing resources during the period of the staff member's absence on ORB; and

(c) No exception is made to any of the conditions governing ORB, as set out in sections 3.1 to 3.10.

Location of ORB

3.12 ORB shall normally be taken outside the mission area. At the staff member's request, however, the head of administration at the mission may approve ORB to destinations within the mission area, provided such destinations have a hardship classification level of A or B.

Relationship of ORB with other entitlements

3.13 Staff members shall be on full pay status while on ORB. Entitlement to mission subsistence allowance for the period shall be subject to the provisions of ST/AI/1997/6.

3.14 ORB does not affect the periodicity or accrual of any other travel or leave entitlement. However, travel outside the mission area on annual leave, home leave or family visit travel shall not be authorized until at least one month after return from ORB.

3.15 Travel costs when travelling on ORB shall be the exclusive responsibility of the staff member. However, in those missions where United Nations has means of transport arranged for official purposes, every effort shall be made to facilitate the use of such transport by staff members leaving or coming back to the mission area on ORB, at no cost or minimal cost, on a "non-interference space available" basis.

Section 4
Special ORB due to extraordinary additional workload

4.1 Notwithstanding the requirement of section 1.3 above that eligible staff members serve at a special mission or location designated for ORB purposes, a special ORB shall be granted on an individual basis at other missions or locations to eligible staff members provided the requirements set out in sections 4.2 to 4.6 are met.

Advance determination that special ORB may be granted at a mission not otherwise designated for ORB purposes

4.2 Before any special ORB may be granted, the head of administration at the mission concerned shall be required to make a preliminary determination that there will be extraordinary additional work that may justify special ORB, such as the start-up, expansion or liquidation of a mission, the launching of special projects or a specified period of election registration and observation. The determination shall not become effective until it is endorsed by the head of the department or office at Headquarters which is responsible for the mission concerned, and may not apply retroactively.

Conditions for special ORB

4.3 After it has been determined that special ORB may be granted at a mission not otherwise designated for ORB purposes, special ORB may be granted to staff members who have worked 10 full days over and above the mission's official working days during a three-month period of qualifying service as defined in section 3.2, provided such work was approved in advance by the head of administration at the mission, on recommendation of the staff member's Chief of Section.

4.4 The 10 days required under section 4.3 may be accrued in full-day or half-day increments during the weekend or any official holiday. Additional hours worked which do not amount to a full or a half working day shall not be counted towards qualification for special ORB.

4.5 Qualifying service accrued for purposes of special ORB may not be carried forward or used in another mission or location.

4.6 ORB conditions set out in sections 3.5 to 3.15 of the present instruction shall also apply to special ORB.

Certification and reporting requirements

4.7 Special ORB may be granted only upon written certification by the staff member's immediate supervisor and Chief of Section that the staff member was required to report to work on each of the additional days, and that the staff member did, in fact, work the additional time over a three-month period of qualifying service. Every supervisor and Chief of Section shall be personally accountable for the accuracy of their certification.

4.8 The head of administration at the mission shall report on a quarterly basis to the head of the department or office at Headquarters which is responsible for the mission concerned on all special ORBs granted to individual staff members.

Section 5
Final provisions

5.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on 1 January 2001.

5.2 Internal guidelines and practices followed locally before the issuance of the present instruction to afford compensatory time off and/or rest and recuperation to staff members serving at special missions shall be discontinued. The present instruction replaces and abolishes any previous ORB guidelines, all prior policies and regimes of supplementary and/or ad hoc provisions and informal local

arrangements concerning leave granted for rest and recuperation to internationally recruited staff.

(*Signed*) Joseph E. **Connor**
Under-Secretary-General for Management